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WRMC

FM-PHASIS

THE RADIO STATION PUBLICATION

WRMC Middlebury-2003 issue 1

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Why Middlebury Needs WRMC: The Role of College Radio in Liberal Education

by Ryan Abernathey

It is evident from these things, then, that music can render the character of the soul of a certain quality. If it is capable of doing this, clearly it must be employed and the young must be educated in it.

Aristotle, Politics Book VIII

I think music has a special place in the lives of human beings, and especially college students. It has a unique ability to influence our emotions, to inspire nostalgia, and to foster friendship. The appreciation of music's power and beauty surely has a place in a liberal arts curriculum. And everybody knows, the DJ makes or breaks a party.

Of course, not all music has this power. Just the good stuff. There's plenty of uninspired, shallow, trite music out there. Don't believe me? Tune your radio to any commercial radio station and you'll see what I mean. These stations have one goal in mind: to keep you from turning the dial. They fear inspiring any true emotion in their listeners. As for classic-rock stations, while their music might once have had meaning, they now only serve to perpetuate the myth that rock and roll is dead. And you can listen to their entire rotation in a few days.

Contrary to popular opinion, there are good new artists. In fact, the number of good new artists is mind-boggling and inspires hope, awe, and humility in anyone who skims the surface of their creativity. But they're struggling under the radar of mainstream, corporate-controlled media. The act of sitting in the studio and broadcasting your favorite bands out across Vermont makes our community a better place. It's a wonderful and unique opportunity. A common misconception is that WRMC promotes "indie" music for political reasons. The fact is, independent artists tend to be much better because their creativity is unhampered by the demands of commercial success. Likewise, WRMC's preference for independent music is a consequence of the search for sublime musical enlightenment, not an end unto itself.

Does pop music really deserve such reverence? Do rock, hip-hop, and electronica really merit the attention of scholars? Of course they do. Like the feature film and the novel, the album is a chosen artistic medium of our time. If one can overcome the stuffy distinction between the "high art" of academia and "lesser" forms of art like rock music, it's easy to see that certain rock albums speak to the most important questions we face. Making this leap of faith opens the door to the vast and mysterious world of meaningful contemporary music. Free experimental jazz, the rightful heir to the crown of improvisation, fills the clubs and bars of Sydney and New Zealand. Tokyo's venues teem with fans hungry for the dense laptop soundscapes of the city's musical innovators. Across Europe, generations raised on electronic dance music explore the endless possibilities of abstract sound, from poppy synth tunes to pounding drum 'n bass to minimal techno. Right here in America, hip-hop artists are elevating their craft to the highest ranks of art. And of course, throughout the world, the enigmatic force of rock and roll rejuvenates itself every day when kids with guitars try to make something beautiful.

WRMC is Middlebury's only connection to the hip, urban world of new music. We have direct access to independent labels, booking agents, and promoters. But unlike those in cities, we don't have to deal with the pretension associated with a "scene". It's the best of both worlds, and it leaves us free to focus on the music, which is the point of it all. WRMC makes no claim to possession of a "cannon" of great indie music. On the contrary, we recognize our own ignorance before the overwhelming possibilities the world of music offers. Our mission is to share this wonder and reverence with as many people as possible. Exploring new music is a journey of the soul that every thoughtful person should undertake.

The Low Interview

By Nathan Hogan

Duluth, Minnesota trio Low, formed in 1994, started out as pioneers of the 1990s "slowcore" movement but have, over the course of numerous full-lengths, eps, and collaborations, come to completely transcend that tag. The trio – comprised of Alan Sparhawk, Mimi Parker, and Zak Sally – have received wide critical acclaim for their chilling harmonies, slowly unfolding tempos, and nuanced attention to sound; their essentialist approach to music defies minimalist categorizations. Low's new record, *Trust* (Kranky), recorded by the band in a church in Duluth and mixed by famed engineer Tchad Blake, is perhaps their most diverse and rewarding listen yet, a thirteen-song collection that swings between fuzzed-out rockers and lengthy, textured compositions with consummate skill. WRMC alums Nate Hogan and Emily Wanderer caught up for a chat with the band before their show at the Coolidge Corner Theatre in Brookline, Massachusetts. Low's tour continues through late November.

Emily Wanderer: How is the tour going so far?
Alan Sparhawk: Good. We're one week into it and we're still trying to figure out how to play some of the songs, but for the most part it's going alright.
Nathan Hogan: We recently spoke to a friend from Duluth who saw your opening night show, and he said it was played at the Sacred Heart church where you recorded the new record. Do you perform there often, and is it regularly used for shows?
AS: We've played there two other times, I guess, over the last four or five years.
Zak Sally: It's a great place to play as far as Duluth clubs go. It's the place probably most suitable for us, the place "least rocking". It's this beautiful church that we get to play in, so it's pretty great.
AS: It's very, very spacious and ambient so it's not ideal for certain types of music – anything that has any volume starts getting lost in there – but it's kind of a nice challenge.
EW: What's the Duluth music scene like in general? I know you're involved with local bands through your Chairkickers label.
AS: The Duluth scene's pretty good for a town of only about 100,000 people. There are a lot of bands and a few places to play and some people who run weekly arts papers who are pretty in touch with what's going on. There are so many factors that go into making a music scene or an arts scene work, and Duluth seems to have all of the parts and enough people who

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Introducing the 2003-2004 91.1 WRMC-FM Staff

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And the Grand Arbiters of Culture, our Music Managers

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Electronica
Nate Dorr and Ryan Abernathey

Hip Hop
Andy Rossmeisel and Dan Russell

Loud Rock
Asa Thomas-Train

World
Alex Fuller

Jazz
Conor Stinson

Blues
Laura Isham and Andrew Gustafson

Folk
Char Carlson and Megan Osterhout

Reggae
Morgan Byrne

Not to mention our hundreds of student and faculty DJs!

BIG WEEKEND EVENT

UPCOMING CONCERT – The Decemberists

Coltrane Lounge, Friday 10/24, 9pm

By Lucas Kavner

The Decemberists are certainly not normal. In fact, they are what you might call "abnormal." Anyone who dresses like a pirate on a regular basis can't be normal, right? Why do we care about pirates?

Colin Meloy, lead singer and guitarist makes us care. He writes songs about orphans, chimney sweeps, and Billy Liar who stares at the neighbor's underwear. In "Los Angeles I'm Yours," Meloy belts: "How I abhor this place!/It's sweet and bitter taste/Has left me wretched, retching on all fours." He earnestly croons his ultra original lyrics over a backdrop of accordion, strings, horns, vibes, keyboards, and Meloy's own perfect acoustic guitar strumming.

The album feels like it either could have been released in the last month or the 1920's. It has an appeal that is almost impossible to put your finger on, but once you accept the perfectly crafted lyrical stories and the gorgeous melodies that Meloy's voice allows, the Decemberists will sink into your skin.

The Decemberists are a "delicious rare fruit, so ripe and sweet" (Pop Matters). Their album is a "glorious triumph" and they "deserve to become your new favorite band" (No Ripcord). They deliver "glorious fantastic tales without ever getting boorish" (The Onion).

And believe it or not, they're coming to your very own school: Middlebury College in Vermont. Yes, we are in Vermont. They'll be performing in The Coltrane Lounge on Friday, October 24th. The doors open at 9:00 pm. Come see the Decembrists sweep you off your feet, because while Johnny may be more attractive, Colin Meloy has nicer glasses.

WRMC Program Schedule – Fall 2003 – http://wrmc.middlebury.edu

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning 6am–9am	Galloping Through the Morning Dew	Sakal Herg	Galloping Through the Morning Dew	Tired Robot	Karnaval	Scary Robot	Crazy Robot
	THE "HOT" SEAT!				Branded	A Contemporary Morning	
World/Folk 9am–12pm	Megan's Folk Show	Good with Coffee	Monjes en la Madrugada	The Pre-Rock Show	The Merry Folkster	The Squirrelly Dan Show	Tiempo de Descanso
	Juicy	Green Mountain Grass	Feelin' Folky	Hot Biscuits	Hollow Star	These Shoes Don't Fit	The Girly Show
Blues Cafe 12pm–1:30pm	Tangled Up in Blue	The Highway is my Life	Special Time	The Cash Show	Preaching the Blues	PANTHER FOOTBALL!!	New Young Idea
Jazz 1:30pm–3:30	Music of the Mid-East	Lazy, Dark Tea Time	After Lunch	Virtuosity	Bebop and Beyond		The Best Damn Sports_
	Arecelis Lucero	Jay Saves the Day					The Indie-an Reservation
Reggae/Latin 3:30pm–6:00pm	Shake & Sweetwater	The Make-a-Wish Foundation	(specified show)	Dick Cheney and the Illuminati: All-Stars	It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World	Party Up!	Happy Hour
Talk Shows	Branded	The FRC	TBD	Yellow Show	We Believe in Non-Sting	Rockazo	Urban Rhythms
		New Young Idea	Hip Hop Politics	Clocktowers Competition		Trance Invasion	Revealed
Prime Time 6pm–10pm	The Lotus Flame	<3	The Sad Robot	The Power Motion Picture Hour	Jazz for your Ass	Vermont Cow Phunk	Know the Toe
	Phestering Drippage	The Bus to Africa	Death Goes to the Disco	Rhythm and Static	Schmormat	Fat Robot	Smelly Nathan Wants to Rock
Hip-Hop	B2C: The Vengance	Inner City Sunlight	Tintinnabulation	Da' Joint	The Union	Cali Kings	Album of the Week
Rocktorial Emissions 11:30pm–3am	Mass Appeal	Keep Me Alive	I Like the Sweater PTW	Liquid Lounge	Hey, Do You Guys Like...	I Am Not a Robot!	European Love Parade
	The Eleventh Hour		Polymorphous Arousal	Self-Loathing Anonymous	Words and Guitar		Harmonic Mix
							The 80's Metal Show
Graveyard Shift 3am–6am	Rasta Funkin'	Hey, Do You Girls Like Joy Division?	Rainy Day Osmosis	Cucumbah Jack and Gals	Songs that Keep Katie out of the Clocktower	Quentin and Snake Show	Champlain Underground Mixshow
						Zu in the Zoo	Evil Robot

6 am, 7 am, 8 am, 9 am, 10 am, 11 am, 12 pm, 1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm, 4 pm, 5 pm, 6 pm, 7 pm, 8 pm, 9 pm, 10 pm, 11 pm, 12 pm, 1 am, 2 am, 3 am, 4 am, 5 am

Studio Phone: 443-6323

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care enough to go out and see bands. It's nice because the town's isolated just enough so that people aren't jaded about the number of shows that come through, and everybody just kind of shows up for whoever's playing on a given night. For a small town I think it's very good. I don't think it will be the next Olympia or anything, but it's good.

NH: Let's talk a bit about the new record. What are you excited about in terms of the progression you've made since *Things We Lost in the Fire*?

AS: We're excited about being even more out of touch with what's cool.

ZS: Yeah, I'm excited about that. It doesn't make other people more excited, but in terms of you asking how the tour is going, it's kind of strange how excited we are about playing these new songs. We definitely feel like the record is some kind of progression.

NH: How long ago was it recorded, exactly?

AS: The early part of the year. We started at the end of February and worked on and off for four or five weeks.

NH: How many of these songs are new to you? I remember reading somewhere that some of them you had been playing awhile and others you worked out in the recording process.

AS: Yeah, it's exactly that. It kind of spans over a whole year and a half, I mean a couple of songs we had when we made *Things We Lost in the Fire* but they were just so new and we weren't quite sure if they were there yet. Which is a good thing, because later on, through playing them live for awhile, they ended up being the songs that are the most confident and straight-forward songs on the record. But, in general, we write from time to time and it all sort of happens as it goes, and luckily there's enough for a record when it comes time to put it together.

NH: Do you ever consider revisiting old material after playing it live for so long, and revamping it or renewing it?

ZS: We think about thinking about it. It's a really difficult thing, though, because what are you going to do? Are you going to go back and completely rethink a song in the same context as what you're doing right now and try messing with it? I mean, it's valid, but it somehow seems more valid to just make new stuff. We're not Wire, but that was great how they'd go out and make a new record and before anybody had heard it, they'd play the new stuff. People would ask, "why don't you play the stuff that we know," and they'd say, "why would we play that? We recorded it, and you can listen to it all day on your stereo." But I would like to state for the record that we aren't Wire.

EW: Besides for Wire, what other bands are you listening to these days?

AS: Oh, I don't know, nothing very new. Which is nothing against anybody who is doing new stuff. I'm sure they're all nice people. Let's see, what did we get excited about buying recently, Prince's Greatest Hits, An Iggy Pop record...

Mimi Parker: You all liked that Pedro the Lion record, right?

AS: Yeah, that one that came out six months ago, or so.

ZS: That's a fantastic record.

AS: And the rest are, I'm sure, nice people.

MP: You're being bad.

AS: I'm in a terrible mood right now. It's because I was looking at music magazines.

ZS: That's the kiss of death. (In Rock Star Voice) "Aw man, so last night I was up and you should have seen the drugs I was doing. It was insane. And this girl came knocking on the door so I jumped out the window, so I was six flights up, it was so crazy, but anyway, what were we talking about?"

MP: What was that from, who said that?

ZS: That's what's going to get people excited about us because we're not normal people who just go out and make music. We "do exciting stuff".

AS: We're really, really irresponsible.

EW: So, are you guys tired of just being referred to as a "slow, quiet" band because it's so reductive? On this record you even rock out!

AS: I don't know, it's fine.

MP: Oh, it's old, you know?

ZS: Yeah. It is just reductive but I guess it kind of still describes what we do so I don't think it's insulting.

NH: Can you talk a bit about the change of producers between Steve Albini and Tchad Blake?

AS: We worked with Steve Albini for a couple of records and it went really well. We liked working with him, but we thought after doing a couple of records we should move on. It wasn't as much about not wanting to work with him as it was knowing we needed to stir the tanks a little bit, to kind of help ourselves think differently. We know what we have to do to put ourselves in a different mode to write and to work in and we thought we'd try tracking more or less on our own, and closer to home this time. It turned out, last minute we were able to work out mixing with Tchad Blake who has a completely different approach to mixing than Steve. Well, not completely, but kind of a different approach. So that was kind of exciting. I guess it's kind of nice that we're confident enough in our music that we're comfortable with moving from place to place and person to person. We're confident that whatever turns out, even if it's different from one person to another, is still something we can work with.

NH: So Blake was involved with the mixing, but did you record it yourselves?

AS: We recorded it more or less ourselves. We had Tom Herbers who's worked with us a lot over the years engineer it, but in essence we were sort of left on our own and to motivate ourselves to get things done.

EW: I really liked your collaboration with the Dirty Three for Konkurrent's *In The Fishtank* series. Can you talk a bit about how that came together?

ZS: Oh, thanks a lot. They're one of the bands that we really like.

AS: That was a really fun record. That's a really good example of putting yourself in a different experience in an effort to come up with something different. Creatively that was just great. We fell into making music right away, as soon as they got there, and it was really, really fun.

ZS: It was surprising on a lot of levels because they are so purposefully loose and we're so particular. Even though they were friends of ours and we felt there were common elements in the music, we realized we only had a day and a half and we were worried whether it was actually going to work.

NH: What ideas did you have going in? Did you enter knowing, for instance, that you wanted to cover "Down By The River"?

ZS: We had that idea, yeah. They had a couple of ideas and we had a couple of ideas, Alan had some guitar figures. Everybody just kind of sat down and ate some bread and when the bread was gone....

MP: It just kind of fell together.

NH: Is that something you would do again? Maybe not there and in that context, but a quick collaboration of that sort?

ZS: I guess. I mean it would have to be like what I just said about the Dirty Three. It would have to be someone that we knew right away, or we would have to have some idea that there were enough common elements for it to work, otherwise... well, we wouldn't go in with Helmet.

(At this point Mimi pulls a World Weekly News with a picture of the world's fattest cat out of her purse for all to see, officially concluding the interview).

LINKS OF INTEREST

Kranky Records: brainwashed.com/kranky

Low's Official Site (includes choice links): Chairkickers.com

From SARA KINSEY, our Music Director:

I've been having a lot of fun this year because there is so much music out that is just really fucking good. Compiling the top 30 charts every week is such a pleasure. And finding new stuff to put on rotation, which used to be kind of a stretch, is really easy. In fact, there have been issues with my not being able to detach from a CD that's been on rotation for too long but having four new ones that should take its place.

If I were to generalize, I'd say that the most striking trend in music that we've seen at WRMC this year is a huge influx in the amount of danceable indiepop music that we receive. Call it electroclash pop, dance pop, New York post-punk neo new wave artrock or whatever, but basically everyone seems to have become tired of introspective wallowing. I guess this mirrors the recent popularity of stuff like the White Stripes, the Vines, etc. Also, there's a lot of new hip-hop and electronic that appeals to indie rockers; it's been getting heavy play, and even charting in the college music journal in the top 200 category (usually dominated by rock music) **Prefuse 73** (a.k.a. Scott Herren), for example, put his last album out MONTHS ago and still ranks as one of the top-played albums at the station. **Four Tet** is another one that just won't die. Not that it should. The amount of play that the DFA label compilation is getting on rock shows has also surprised me.

I thought I'd try to organize of the music that's been charting this year into categories for people that aren't familiar with it, but know what they like.

The Sound: *80s-inspired synthesizers, frenzied vocals, fast and heavy beats and amazingly addictive melodies.*
Note: there's also a bunch of smoother-sounding styles with more of a French feel to them (think **Broadcast, Stereolab,** **Mow and Pow, Black Box Recorder** who, by the way, all have new music out.)

The Bands: **The Rapture** – A very stylish (they're referenced in the hipster handbook) NYC band. Really spazzy and hot rock music. Their new album "Echoes" is on the also ultra-cool DFA label. **Pretty Girls Make Graves**, "The New Romance"; tough-sounding, but thoughtful and smart girls. Can we get a Smiths reference? This album is on Matador records. Also check out **Casiotone for the Painfully Alone**, **Slumber Party**, **Weakerthans**.

The Sound: *Upbeat (this can be deceptive, because a lot of the lyrics are goddamn depressing) indiepop.*
These are people that take their cues from the likes of the Beach Boys, Guided by Voices, Neutral Milk Hotel, etc, and are what I consider the modern equivalent of a band like Pavement. Again, that was just a huge generalization.
The Bands: **The Shins**, who put out the best album of 2001 ("Oh, Inverted World") and have finally returned with "Chutes too Narrow," which we just received last week after months of harassing the people at Subpop. You can't beat the shins for ingeniously bitter and melancholy lyrics set to beautiful and uplifting pop music. **The Decemberists** feature brilliant, eccentric songs about pirates, orphans and military men that you have probably heard a hundred times if you've tuned into WRMC more than once this year. They're playing here on October 24th. Their new album "Her Majesty The decemberists" is out on Kill Rock Stars. **Quasi** – I feel like these two deserve classic status by now. Their songs are funny and biting and gorgeous. Their new album "Hot Shit!" on Touch and Go records. **East River Pipe** is strangely retro, menacing ballads about despairing millionaires and whores.

The Sound and Bands: If you want to hear some relaxing, folksy backporch music, check out **Iron and Wine**, **Azure Ray**, and **The National**, to name a few.

Specifying the (specified show)

By Christina Galvez and Ali Shapiro

The partnership between Ali Shapiro and Christina Galvez began last year in the halls of Stew 4 because they both had Macs. iTunes facilitated the exchange of music and then a potential rendezvous at the much-anticipated (but ultimately anti-climactic) FieldDay Festival united them in anger against MTV and the mating habits of those damn birds. When school began two months later, Ali and Christina decided that perhaps they should put their preoccupation with sad songs and mogue-tainted music to use with a radio show. They were pleasantly surprised that WRMC agreed to help. So evolved the (specified show).

Every Wednesday from 3:30 to 5 in the afternoon, Ali and Christina meticulously select and then play music according to pretty jacket color, general beauty of lead singer, curious track titles, and the approval of Jocelyn Florence.

An example of this thorough process, in the form of a playlist:

the rapture: out of the races onto the tracks: out of the races onto the tracks
mission of burma: that's when i reach for my revolver: signals, calls and marches
mogwai: kids will be skeletons: happy songs for happy people
galaxie 500: pictures: today
land of the loops: multi-family garage sale: bundle of joy
neutral milk hotel: king of carrots pt. 1: in the aeroplane over the sea
pavement: trigger cut/wounded kite at 17: slanted and enchanted
boards of Canada: roygbiv: music has the right to children
the decemberists: the bachelor and the bride: her mageaty
my bloody valentine: soon: loveless
radiohead: true love waits: i might be wrong
swirlies: in harmony newfound freedom : they spend their youthful days in the glittering world of salons
the sea and cake: soft and sleep: nassau
joy division: atrocity exhibition: closer
ween: spinal meningitis: chocolate and cheese
sahara hotnights: teeange kicks: keep up the speed
sugarcubes: birthday: life's too good
the stone roses: i wanna be adored : the stone roses
the american analog set: the wait: the golden band
interpol: stella was a diver and she was always down: turn on the bright lights
aphex twin: nannou: windowlicker
bright eyes: dunk kid catholic
ugly casanova: barnacles: sharpen your teeth

A Little Q&A for C&A:

Habitat:
Christina: Where the Trader Joe cat cookies are...
Ali: Sub-free coffrin. Thank you, summer draw - at last, a place where I belong.
Mindless preoccupation:
Christina: Swatting flies at proctor.
Ali: chasing squirrels.
on our ipods right now:
Christina: Angels of Light, Blow-Up soundtrack.
Ali: National, Radiohead, The Magnetic Fields.
what should be a closet fetish:
Christina: Duran Duran.
Ali: Online backgammon.
Present quandary:
Christina: Location of Middcard.
Ali: Who sings that "marry me" song (it goes, "someone, somewhere, said to me / won't someone, somewhere, marry me...if you can put an end to my quandering, email ashapiro@middlebury.edu).
Struggle of the semester:
Christina: Dead air.
Ali: Paradise Lost.
Favorite concert accessory:
Christina: White wig.
Ali: Red velvet flocked aviators with rainbow lenses.
Vice:
Christina: E-mail...and lack thereof...
Ali: weather.com
"They would be our lovers if they listened to our show":
Christina: Interpol. Those ties. That hair.
Ali: Conor Oberst/Bright Eyes. That melodrama and pretentiousness.
dj alias options:
Christina: DJ Rio? (see fetish comment).
Ali: DJ Milton (see struggle comment).
reasons you should listen to (specified show):
Christina: We don't discriminate against happy upbeat songs.
Ali: Because my dad calls in and requests The Eagles almost every show.